

INSIDE THE GAME: THE TWELVE ELEMENTS OF PEAK PERFORMANCE

Chapter 3

DOUG DECINCES

Doug DeCinces was kind enough to grant me an interview at his office in Strawberry Farms Golf Course. Mr. DeCinces now runs a successful real estate firm and developed the Strawberry Farm Course. He had a very successful career in Major League Baseball. He played for the Baltimore Orioles from 1973 to 1981 and was then traded to the California Angels, with whom he played until 1987.

Mr. DeCinces was a right handed infielder who played third base. He was born and raised in Southern California and played Little League baseball in the San Fernando Valley.

Over his fifteen year career, he hit 237 home runs, played in the 1979 World Series in which he hit a home run in his first at bat, played on the 1983 All Star Team, and was elected to the Angels All Time Team in 2000. During his successful career he achieved the AL Silver slugger Award in 1982, hit, 20+ Home Runs in the the 1978, 1982, 1984, 1985 & 1986 Seasons, and hit 30-Home Runs 1982. He also founded and sponsors the Doug DeCinces March of Dimes Celebrity Golf Tournament held for nine years and is completing his 20th Annual Doug DeCinces Orangewood Classic (abused & neglected children charity in Orange County, California.)

Mr. DeCinces is a very intelligent and articulate man. He was generous with his time and his spirit. Although a very busy and successful business man we spent well over an hour in a very open and relaxed atmosphere.

All too often we hear, “it’s a small world.” Well yes it is! Mr. DeCinces and I were discussing childhood baseball and discovered we may have played against each other when we were around ten years old. I played on a local team in Santa Monica and he was on a team in Northridge. This early childhood connection opened the way for a heartfelt, informative interview on professional baseball, coaching kids, steroids, and self-trust. While my baseball career peaked in Pony League, with a pitching record of 14 wins and no loses, he went on to become a great professional player.

While Mr. DeCinces stats are noteworthy, the most powerful aspect of his professional career began when he replaced Brooks Robinson at third base. This is a story worth telling and remembering!

ON DEPTH OF BEING

DR. MANN

Doug, what do you think your greatest accomplishment was in professional sports?

Doug DeCinces

Replacing Brooks Robinson and going on to have my own career. A lot of people don't know what it's like to replace the living legend and still go out there and try to fulfill your dream. Brooks Robinson in Baltimore was, heck, he could have run for mayor and governor in the same year and won both elections. The guy was and is a gracious and wonderful person. Personally, we had a great relationship and everything, but heck, I was the guy that they picked that was going to take his job.

Every time I took that field to replace him, the fans in Baltimore didn't want to see me. You know, they wanted to see him. When I would go on the road, every columnist, not the beat writers, but the columnists, would come in and do this story about who's this kid thinking he can take over for the future Hall of Famer. There were some very negative things said, some positive things, but also negative things, because everybody always had an opinion, it was a better article that way.

But more importantly I was trying to be accepted by my peers and my teammates. I had some sympathetic teammates that would come up and say,

“Hey, don't listen to that. Don't do that. Don't let these people bother you. Don't let Earl Weaver bother you. You've got to just become who you are.”

And it would kind of wake me up, because I had put up such a fence in my own mind, to be able to get over that hurdle of not being that person, you know, to not let who I was replacing affect who I was trying to become.

That's not easy. I mean, I can tell you a time where, true story, my parents brought my grandmother to watch me play my first major league game back in Baltimore.

We're playing against the Minnesota Twins in a double header. I'm not playing the first game. I started the second game. And as I'm warming up, there are 36,000 fans that day, and I was warming up and running. And I'm 24, 25 years old, you know, trying to make it. And there'd be some old Baltimore blue-collar guys yelling,

"DeCinces, you're never going to replace Brooks Robinson."

I'm just warming up. I mean, I'm not even in the game yet. And then they announce my name, starting third baseman, and there's that spattering of boos, just because they want to see Brooks.

Trying not to take that personally is very difficult; and then as the game is going on, Mike Cuellar's is getting hit around, and there are bases loaded. And the guy hits a shot down the line. And I dive and it tips off my glove and rolls over by the tarp. And I run over, Belanger (shortstop) and I both run over and get it. By the time we get it, two runners have scored. Now fans start chanting,

"We want Brooks!"

Well, let me tell you, Brooks wasn't going to get that ball! I mean, it was just one of those things. The stadium started picking it up.

"We want Brooks! We want Brooks!"

And I'm standing out there going, it's a hit all the way. And sure enough, the next guy, Larry Hisle, I'll never forget him, hits a one hop shot, I mean just a rocket. And I just cover it up.

It hits me and bounces in front of me, off my chest. I go pick it up and, throw to Boog Powell at first base. It's bang, bang, he's safe, and another run scores. Now, I get an error for that one.

And now the stadium is roaring. "WE WANT BROOKS!" And I'm going, "This is impossible!" We get out of the inning. We go one, two, three, come back out, and sure enough, another ball comes to me. And now I've got this fear of making a mistake, a fearing of failure. And I'll never forget that feeling. The ball's coming, I'm thinking, "Oops, don't miss it;" and sure enough, error.

Now the stadium is going again. We get out of that inning, the run doesn't score. They got five runs in the first inning. I come in. I come up to home plate. And the fans are chanting,

"We want Brooks!!"

And Gene Roof was the catcher, and he turns around and he says,

"How do you handle this?" He goes, "Is this like this all the time you play?"

And I said,

"Well, it's not this bad, but it can get pretty rough."

He says,

"All our teammates are going, our whole team's over there going, 'How the heck do you survive this?'"

Now you get that kind of thought going in your brain. You know, it is so bad that you get opposing guys trying to be sympathetic for you a little bit. And you start feeling it – and sure enough, I strike out. I come back, and now I'm just so frustrated. I've got the pressure of my grandmother and family here and listening to the whole stadium booing me and all that kind of stuff.

Earl Weaver (manager of the Orioles) came up to me and he says,

“I’m going to take you out of the game,”

Because he was afraid that I was collapsing, and he didn’t want to ruin my career.

I realized right then and there that if he took me out of that game I was never going to make it. I looked at him and I said,

“Over my dead body!”

I’ll never forget it, because Earl’s a pretty gruff guy, especially in the dugout. There’s not a lot of sensitivity to the man. He saw my reaction, and at that point in time I think he recognized I wasn’t going to let him, as well as these people, destroy my dream.

I mean I got angry, and I went out and played. I’ll never forget; I made every play, and every time I did, there was this sarcastic clapping. One time somebody threw a paper airplane. I went over and picked it up, put it in my pocket, and the stadium gives me a standing ovation. I mean, it was really bad. But my next at bat, I had an RBI single. Then my next at bat, I hit a two run home run. Then I came up with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning, a man on first base, and I tripled. So now I’ve got all four RBIs and I’m the tying run at third base with two outs. And the stands all stood up and clapping; they were applauding me! Naturally, my mind was to show them what I thought of them. But I’ll never forget, Billy Hunter was the coach who came over and he goes,

“Don’t do anything that I would do.” He said, “Just don’t do it.” And he says to me, “That’s how to show these people who you are!”

But I was still so angry. I wasn’t there to reward myself at that point in time. This was my internal battle. I’d be nice to fans when I was there, it wouldn’t affect who I was as a person,

except when I went to play the game. I look back at that now, and one of the things that allowed me to become a clutch RBI hitter and defensive player (and I look back at that part of my career and say, you know, I could do that; I could come up with a game on the line and not have it affect me, and be able to perform) was because of what I went through everyday with all that extra pressure, and trust me, it didn't end that day. It went on way after.

I played eight plus years at third base for the Orioles. I had the second most games played there. But it still would always be Brooks, no matter what I accomplished. And if I made a diving play, it was, "a Brooks Robinson play." But that never bothered me, because I learned to get over the fact, I didn't take that personally. I took that as a compliment, because I knew what a great player and what a great person Brooks Robinson was.

And I know that some players probably could have said, you know, "Forget that. It's a Doug DeCinces play," or whoever you are, because they fight for their own identity. And I learned to say, "Thank you very much," because I looked at that always as a compliment, and not as, "You're not recognizing who I am." And I think mentally that allowed me to say, you know, I was very fortunate to be able to survive and be a part of what that was. The Baltimore Orioles are still a major part of who I am today.

COMMENTARY

WOW! What a story. Talk about trial by fire. Talk about digging deep! I get anxious every time I read this story. Can you imagine being a young man of 25 years and having a stadium full of people booing at you because you are NOT Brooks Robinson.

What impresses me about this story is the depth of character that is revealed. Many people would have buckled under that kind of pressure. I don't know if the reader can appreciate what it feels like to have 30,000 people projecting negative energy at you. I can tell you it ain't pretty!

Mr. DeCinces' ability to pull himself together and perform under those circumstances does not come from any technique. That kind of character strength is the result of a strong inner core. I do have some thoughts about the source of Mr. DeCinces strength, which I will share when we talk about his childhood.

It is said that we have free will and it is our ability to choose that makes us unique as humans. Too often we hear people complaining about this life circumstance and blaming others for their life difficulties. This style of whining and complaining undermines any sense of strength and ability to conquer adversity. So why is it that some people seem to rise to another level under adversity and others seem to crack? The hard truth is that it appears to be the result of an inner core, an inner sense of self that is solid, strong and resilient. The saying, "Golf does not create character, it reveals it" speaks to this. True greatness is not the result of techniques and simple positive thinking. When all the forces of life come together in such a way to stress the very fabric of your being, to play upon your hopes and fears, to create a path that leads either to exhilaration or despair, then and only then will the true depth of your being be revealed. Smart trash talk won't see you through, nor will hopeful thinking. When you come face to face with life and death, either symbolically or realistically, it is the depth of your heart and strength of your soul, that perhaps was even unknown to you until that very moment, which will lift you to a new

and higher terrain of expression and all those blessed to witness you in that moment, will be uplifted and inspired by the sheer power of your being. This is the terrain of peak performance!

If there was ever a defining moment in a man's life, this was it for Doug DeCinces. His choice to stay in the game and fight for what was his, his right to play professional baseball, set the stage for a life of meaning and accomplishment. If there are angels in heaven watching over us, and I believe there are, I am sure they were thrilled when he went back onto the field!

With regards to our twelve elements, we can see a few of them in action thus far in Doug's story: Belief in oneself, Positive mental outlook, Drive, Perseverance and Heart. It is important to remember that one's inner core allows a person to manifest these qualities. Mike Tyson is a good example of someone who has exceptional talent, but went off track because of tremendous internal difficulties. So, while these traits are important, it takes a solid psychological and mental foundation in order to apply them.

So the question naturally arises, where does this depth of being come from? Why do some people rise to the occasion and others fall? There are no simple answers to this important question. One factor is certainly the type of parenting we receive. If we are raised in loving and stable family, where our parents love and respect each other, and treat us the same, then an inner core of self-worth, value and strength is developed to help us throughout our life. If we are raised with a constant barrage of "you worthless . . .," "you will never amount to anything," "you will never make it," and/or "you are such a disappointment," you will have a lot to overcome. It is possible to overcome these early childhood messages, but it is not easy. Two individuals can

have the same traumatic early childhood experiences, but one grows up to succeed and the other fails. So, childhood development is not all encompassing.

Genetic predisposition also plays a role. It is impossible to separate our psychology from our biology. We know that a family history of alcoholism creates a dangerous predilection for that same disease. Thus, our genetic structure plays a part as well.

On a more esoteric level, there is a growing body of evidence and belief in the Western world that our essential nature is eternal and timeless. A couple of nights ago Deepak Chopra was on the Bill Maher show talking about studies of children who have vivid memories of their past lives. The nature of the soul is consciousness that transcends the early drama of time and space. While each life has a unique expression, the consciousness continues to grow and evolve incarnation after incarnation. So, the work we do in each life is worthwhile and cumulative. We benefit from all that we do, now and in the future; “We sow what we reap.”

This esoteric position is shared in many eastern schools of thought: Buddhism, Hinduism, and the Kabala. Life is viewed as a school for the soul to grow and evolve back into the full awareness of one’s unity with Spirit. It is even believed that the soul, prior to birth, chooses a life that will provide the necessary opportunities for such growth. Life difficulties, then, become opportunities to challenge the self to learn about love, acceptance, surrender, wisdom, perseverance, balance and strength.

Given this bigger perspective about the nature of the Self, our inner core is honed and developed over eternity. Our inner strength is a product of many experiences, some in this time/space continuum and some from beyond.

Our capacity to consciously draw upon our inner realization of Spirit can inspire and empower us to achieve our best. This inner relationship does not solve our problems, but does help us to access our highest potential to stand up against adversity, face our fears and doubts, and successfully use our inherent talents to the best of our ability. Sometimes there is Divine intervention; we know that as Divine Grace. It is a magic moment of feeling some presence or power moving through us, which results in achievements that we thought impossible. We live in a sea of spiritual consciousness that interpenetrates every aspect of our lives. There are moments in sports that express this reality. The chapter with Dick Fosbury directly speaks to this.

For now, however, let's return to the fascinating life of Doug DeCinces.

DR. MANN

Do you have any sense of how you learned to get your ego out of the way? Some players haven't been as successful in doing that. Is it in your family, your faith?

Doug DeCinces

Well, I always Believed. I became a Christian. And before every game, right at the National Anthem, that was a one-on-one time I had with God. And when you're playing every single day, and you would think, here you are standing, national TV, or standing out on this field and all these people are watching, but that was my silent time of saying,

“Thank you, Lord, for giving me the ability to be here, I want you to grant me the opportunity to give everything I have to play.”

I wanted to play with everything I had. I didn't want to come off that field, the same thing I talk to my kids about, don't come off without giving everything you have.

Now, there are some days that I got upset with myself. Even though I might have been successful, if I was two for four or something like that, but you know, there were two at bats I walked up there that I might not have been 100 percent there. And all of a sudden hit a ground ball on a pitch and I'm going, "What are you thinking about?" that type of a deal. That's what allowed me to consistently press forward; God had fulfilled a dream come true for me. And this was an opportunity every day to go out there. And how dare me not give everything that I have! Now, that's an impossible task, I want you to know, it's a goal to try and do that, but pretty much impossible, because, you know, you're a human being. There's going to be some times you go out there and you may try and try and try, and it's not going to come together. You know, it's just not going to happen for you. I don't care what you do. It's just not going to happen. And there are times you go out there and you might be as relaxed and everything and not think you're putting everything together, but yet you're focused and relaxed and you're zoned in; and boom, everything happens for you.

Commentary on the Spiritual

Many of the athletes I spoke with had a strong spiritual life. We will find out more about this from each player. Doug's relationship with God appears to be important because it motivates him to bring out his best performance. His love of and appreciation for God motivates him to do his best, every day. When God is a living reality in your life, not just an abstraction or concept, then that relationship real power to uplift your life.

It is important underline the "relationship" aspect in our spiritual life. The word relationship implies energy moving two ways, back and forth. It is not just we giving love and

devotion to God, but also God responding to our sincere interest and devotion. This is the power of a spiritual life. We create a real tangible relationship with a Higher Power that will help us in every aspect of our lives. Now back to the story.

Doug DeCinces

I had difficulties playing the game. I had confrontations with Earl Weaver (Orioles' manager). I ended up going to a psychologist when I was going through all these different things and it was probably way before anybody's time of knowing that a professional athlete would go see a psychologist to work through some things. And one of the things was that Earl was just a dominating force in that dugout, mentally; he had your career, and he would say things ...and not all of them are positive, trust me. You know, he'd shake your hand every time you hit a three run homerun or you made a nice defensive play, because that's what he expected you to do.

But it's all those other times. Let me tell you, it wasn't easy. And there were a lot of rookies that would come through the organization who folded, couldn't play for the guy and would either go back to the minors or they'd trade them, because Earl figured out – his theory was that, “If you can't play, if I'm upsetting you, then I don't want you up with bases loaded in the bottom of the ninth inning, because, you've got to be able to handle me and play the game the way I want you to play the game, or I don't want you on my team.” And that was kind of his theory.

I was raised you do not disrespect your elders. I just kept taking this abuse, this verbal abuse, and taking it too personal, is really asking a lot what I was doing; taking a lot, and then trying to replace Brooks Robinson, and having the negativity on top of that and everything. I can

remember talking just recently with Brooks Robinson, a couple of years ago, and we were playing golf together. And he said,

“You know, a lot of us veterans” – because I was the only rookie on the team, as well; they were all All Star veteran guys, so he said,

“You know, we could never understand why Earl was always riding you so hard.” He goes, “One time I went up to him and told him, ‘Back off of him.’” And I said,

“You said that?” And he goes,

“Yeah. I told him to back off of you,” because it was abnormal how much he was doing what he was doing.

I think Earl had a problem, that he looked at me as this guy that was taking his favorite player’s position, because you know what? Brooks Robinson helped make Earl Weaver who he was. And Earl had a hard time letting go. And as history proved out, he kept giving Brooks every single opportunity. You know, I’d play second base and shortstop and then back to third. I’d play first and then back to third. I’d go all over the place. But I was just happy to get the opportunity to play back then as a rookie. But on the same token, I never got the, “Hey, kid, I’m behind you. Let’s go do it.” Earl’s theory was, “I put your name in the lineup. Get your ass out there and play. And you’d better be playing the way I want you to play.”

So what happened is I finally stood up to the guy. When he unduly attacked me, I just said, “That’s enough.” And I wouldn’t have probably been able to do that if I hadn’t had gone through some work to recognize that I had to be able to stand on my own feet and not allow somebody to berate me and do those things. It was almost like kind of an abusive situation.

I really lost it, almost punched him right there in the dugout. If it wasn't for a policeman and a couple of players, I was going after him. And he recognized, then, that he had gone too far. And it was the first game of a double header. And it was the year after Brooks Robinson retired. And I came to spring training, and my wife had miscarried the first day of spring training. I missed five days. I came out, and the very first ground ball I took at third base took a bad hop and broke my nose. I had to have surgery. I missed the first three weeks of spring training.

Then I come out, and Earl says, "You know what? We have this young kid Eddie Murray. I want to get him into the lineup. I want you to go play second base." Now, I went through three plus years of replacing Brooks Robinson. First year he's not in uniform, you ask me to go play second base. Eddie screws up. He can't play defensively there. Obviously history proves he's one of the great baseball players in the game, and one of my dear teammates, one of the great offensive players the game has ever seen. But third base he was not. And after making a bunch of errors on the first trip and we lose all three games in Milwaukee, next thing you know I'm back at third.

Now, Earl's trying to get – he's always bouncing things around, trying to get more power into the lineup, so then I go back to second. Then I go back to third. I go back to second, back to third. Finally one game I was to playing at second base, and he's screaming and yelling. And I came off the field and I asked Lee May,

"Who's he mad at?" And he points at me. And I go,

"What did I do?" and he goes, raises his hands like, "I don't know."

And he came up yelling, and I finally lost it. I turned to him and said,

"Are you talking to me?" And he goes,

“Damned right,” and he hit me with his finger in my chest. So I grabbed a hold of his hand. I wouldn’t let go. I said,

“You ever touch me again it will be the last thing you do.”

I started to lose it. And he just tried to keep grabbing his hand, and I wouldn’t let go of it. And I finally let go and he said,

“Smith, you’re playing second base,” and I said,

“And Smith’s playing second base the rest of the year.” I said, “I’m no longer playing second base for you.”

A few minutes later the argument is over; he recognized I got the better of him in front of the team, and so he’s not done with me. He comes after me in the hallway, and I – if it wasn’t for a policeman who tackled me when I was in full swing at Earl, I probably would have been suspended from baseball for a while.

But the funny thing is, and what’s interesting about that story is the mental approach that happened during that time. I mean, I had had enough,

“I’m not taking anymore. I’d taken it from the fans. I’d taken it from Earl. And I’m here to compete, and I’m not going to let somebody get in my way of becoming who I needed, or who I wanted to become.”

And so Earl has his meeting in between the double header and says,

“Well, sometimes I recognize...I expect all of you guys to be competitive, and sometimes I may push too far and say the wrong things. But I’m here to tell you I don’t hold a grudge. I want to win just as bad as you want to win.”

And so the lineup is posted, and I'm playing third base, second game. Palmer's going for his 200th victory. In the seventh inning, 0 – 0, I doubled off the right center field wall to knock in two runs. And I'm out there, and all of a sudden Rich Dauer, who had just been called up, he comes out to second base to pinch run for me. And he can't outrun me. And I said,

“What are you doing here?” And he goes – he's afraid. He's afraid I'm going to go off on him, And he just says,

“Hey, the little guy sent me out.” He goes, “Don't take it out on me.”

So I started walking off the field. And I had all those emotions building up again. And I remember Earl saying, “I don't hold any grudges,” story. And Lee May jumped out of the dugout – he was the DH that game – grabbed a hold of me in front of the dugout and he goes,

“Remember, the little guy doesn't hold any grudges. And you're going with me, and don't you say a word to anybody.”

You know, Lee's a big man. He made me laugh. And that was kind of the way it was. From then on that year, I ended up having 28 home runs and became my own baseball player. The second half of the season was one of the best seasons of my career. And it took that mental breakthrough.

DR. MANN

What do you think allowed you to make that shift?

Doug DeCinces

Recognizing that even though I was raised to always respect your elders, and you know what? That's a great trait, but I was an elder in my own right and there comes a time where you

stand up and you don't allow anybody to mistreat you. And I think I was allowing things to happen, and I was not comfortable. You know, just finally all that came out. Maybe it was the pressure of all the fans all the time, replacing Brooks Robinson. All those things were weighing on me.

And I wasn't playing well. I'll be the first to admit. It was like, "Okay, where am I playing today." Sometimes I'd switch twice in a game. I'd start at second, go to third, finish at second, or go to third, second, and maybe then go to short. Offensively I was doing okay, but no, I really wasn't, I was kind of inconsistent. I think Earl thinks because I had that great second half, his whole theory was to piss me off and I'll play better, because later in the times when, if I wasn't playing the way he thought I should be, he would come and attack me, trying to get me pissed off. And one of the coaches came up and said,

"Doug, he's just trying to get you pissed off. Don't worry about it."

You know, that was his "It happened once, so maybe I can do it again" type deal. But it didn't. I think at that point in time, I had grown through that.

But it was, as I look back, a real turning point; a real turning point. I think those were two turning points in my career that allowed me to go on and become a successful major league baseball player. I mean, as you well know, just playing in the big leagues is very difficult, the odds of playing there and staying are so enormous. But then to have all that other stuff put on top of you, you know. It's tough enough facing the pitchers, not have to face 36,000 fans and the pitcher when you're at home, and a manager.

COMMENTARY

The noted psychologist Carl Jung wrote volumes on personality theory and psychological development. I have always found one of his concepts, “Individuation,” especially useful. Mr. DeCinces initiation in adulthood, and a resulting successful career in professional baseball, can be more fully understood from this point of view.

Dr. Jung suggests that part of growing up and maturing into adulthood requires a break from the prevalent surrounding authority figures. This break may be from parents and or society’s values.

I remember when I was a teenager seeking advice from my father, who was a physician trained in internal medicine. His medical training forced him to develop a style in which he always sounded like an expert, even if he was not very knowledgeable about the topic at hand. On this particular occasion, I was asking him for some advice about some very important to me at that time. I remember the moment when I realized he had no idea as to what he was talking about. I remember saying,

“I really need some advice, but I don’t need lousy advice. This is my life we are talking about!”

In that moment, my relationship with my father shifted and I no longer unconditionally deferred to him as the “expert.”

Jung suggests that in order to fully grow and mature into adulthood, we must break with the surrounding convention or wisdom and embrace our individual feelings and beliefs. The recognition of our own “truth” gives us power to think, feel and act as an individual and

contribute from our unique sense of expression. Original thought, creative ideas, and even playing baseball are done at the highest level when the actions spring from an inner depth of authenticity. Our real power resides within an authentic self and often times it takes courage to stand up and fight for our right to exist. All too often, when we defer to outer “authority” as the true authority we then find ourselves, individually and collectively as a society, being led down a wrong path. The recent political events with the war in Iraq, and the Republican Party’s attempt to coerce us into “non critical thinking” are an example of the misuse of this type of power. There is typically a sense of conflict around this process because the “authority” does not like losing its hold.

Mr. DeCinces was, in a way, ahead of his time by consulting with a psychologist. He demonstrated his “coachability” not only at a physical level, but also at a psychological one as well. It was a wise choice because it gave him the support and psychological understanding that his “respect of elders” was appropriate for him as a child, but not as an adult, if it required him to abdicate his sense of self. It is impossible to do anything well, if we do not have an authentic connection with our deeper self!

If you only take away one idea from this entire book, this one is worth keeping. You cannot excel if you do not honor and respect who you are! Honor and respect means that you express yourself; you honor your life and existence by being who you really are. Do not let other people undermine you, convince you that you cannot achieve your goals, that you do not know what you really feel, or that you do not know what is best for you. If you give up your self, if you give up your power, if you give up your inner knowing, you will die either emotionally or

physically. You will certainly not have a victorious life. This point will be discussed again in the chapter with Dick Fosbury.

A word of advice for parents and coaches: The greatest gift you can give a child is to teach them to know who they are, to recognize their authentic way of being, and encourage them to express it. You are not fulfilling your greatest duty as a parent or coach if you only produce children or players that are made in the image of what you think is “right.” The best coaching and parenting brings out the best in another.

Doug DeCinces’ manager may have been a good manager, but he was not a great one. If you look at the great ones, Vince Lombardi, Phil Jackson, John Wooden, we find men who showed respect for their players. The last two coaches for the Superbowl (2007) Tony Dungy of the Colts and Lovie Smith of the Bears both had a unique coaching style based upon respect, not intimidation.

...ON ANGER

It is worthwhile to note that Doug got pretty angry in this process of individuation from his manager. While he was close to being out of control, wanting to physically attack Weaver, he never totally lost it. In discussion within the sport psychology world, especially in the golf world, anger is often seen as a negative thing. There is a common misconception that the player needs to be centered, focused and calm in order to play her/her best. This is not necessarily true. Debbie Crews, Ph.D., sport psychologist at Arizona State University, did some very interesting research on choking in golf. She had players putting under various degrees of extreme pressure, all the while measuring their brain waves. Her findings, contradicted conventional wisdom in that those

who putted the best were not necessarily the most calm and less aroused. She found that focus was more significant than arousal states for success in putting.

I like this study because it supports what I have experienced in the real world; a player can be emotionally upset, but if he or she is really focused, the emotion can be channeled to enhance performance. Wild emotion that is out of control and has no focus is a disaster. Throwing your clubs after a bad shot typically does not lead to a good recovery shot. Biting off someone's ear in a boxing match is not a good strategy for success. However, being angry and then directing that energy while maintaining a clear focus can take your performance to a higher level. We see this, week after week, with Tiger Woods. He is a fierce competitor who hates to lose. He can get angry, but he is also so focused and determined that he uses the emotion/energy to play ever better. Doug's anger in this situation actually helped him play better and gave him the inner strength and drive to stand up against and conquer adversity.

ON STEROIDS

DR. MANN

What do you think about the steroid problem in baseball?

Doug DeCinces

I think, if you're talking about the mental approach, obviously the mental approach is that somebody's taking steroids because it makes them physically stronger and play better. And they're not thinking about tomorrow; they're thinking about today. I think until Major League Baseball and everybody stepped up and said, "Hey, this is illegal," I don't think you can really condemn those guys beforehand. But, frankly, I don't think Rafael Palmeiro should go to the

Hall of Fame. He's accomplished a lot, but he accomplished it on illegal drugs that he knew he shouldn't have been taking. I may be a little outspoken about that, but guys who took steroids, I mean guys are hitting ridiculous numbers. Barry Bonds hitting 70 plus home runs a year. I said, "You know, that's physically impossible." And yet they're just blowing through record books after record, and just making a mockery of all the guys that played before that didn't do that. I don't know, I just feel like... okay, I hit 240 in my career. Well, if I would have taken steroids, I can tell you I hit 240 balls to the warning track that probably would go out if I were taking steroids.

So, where does that put me in the – or all my other peers that went out and played without it. I played with some guys I knew that were taking it, and it totally changed their physical abilities, 100 percent. So, is that the right thing to do? I know when my son was in the minor leagues; we had numerous conversations because he said,

"Dad, how am I supposed to compete? If I don't take it, how am I supposed to compete?" And I said,

"You compete on what God gave you. And if you can't do it on that, then you need to do something else!"

Now, I'll be the first to tell you that, I drank coffees, and, you know, I did things that, you know, help you get up. That's a long season and stuff like that. But I never took any steroids or anything like that that would potentially harm you. You know, heck, when I was playing in the early 80's, there was a huge cocaine problem. And I a leader of the Players' Association at that time. We're trying to take care of the Willie Wilsons and all the guys, the Norrises and guys like that who got busted for it. But what we had was more of a cocaine problem in the big leagues

than steroids. And now you look at this, and I mean you see players this year that the last three years, you look at them, and how did they get that good? That big? But the guys are sitting there and they're going, "Do I have a choice? I take them so I can stay in the big leagues and make my money and fulfill my dream. But if I don't take them, that general manager is going to send me back down, because he's going to bring up a kid that is taking them."

So I think baseball is more at error than the players. I mean, it's a pressure driven job, to go out and compete on 161, 162 games a year and to go against the greatest in the world, and somebody's saying, "Hey, look at the results I get from taking this," oh my gosh. Guys aren't going to think twice – you know, their mindset is to take it. "Okay, let's go take it."

But then there are others' mindsets that say, "Hey, that's not the right way to do it." And now how do they compete against the guys that are cheating? I mean, you look at Ivan Rodriguez this year (2006). I mean, he doesn't even look like the same person that's been an All Star every year as a catcher (13 years on AS team). You look at pitchers and I'm just going to be glancing around, but, I mean, how do guys in their late 40s throw 95 plus miles an hour? Think they're doing that all by themselves? I don't think so. You know, I would say Nolan Ryan was one of those guys that was really unique. But he had a unique body. But he wasn't all of a sudden 25 pounds heavier and, you know, looking all different. I mean, I look at that thing that happened with Roger Clemens and Piazza, you know. How do you go off like that? You know, steroids do some things to your brains and stuff like that, too. And how does Clemens do that? And I don't

have any proof that he's been taking it or anything like that. But I'll tell you what; I'll be surprised if he hasn't.

That's just kind of the way I look at it. I mean, I think it's wrong. And I think that Palmeiro, of all guys this year, you stand in front of Congress and point your finger at them, and then you go out and take it? And look at Sammy Sosa this year. He's not taking steroids. You look at him, and he's shrunk down enormously and his bat's way back here. It's not out in front, hitting home runs anymore. It's back here. He can't catch up to the ball. There's a marked physical difference in their abilities, your quick twitch muscles and all those things that require you to hit a fastball further or to throw a ball harder. You see a lot of pitchers today, they all of a sudden, they were throwing 93, throwing 88, 89. All those guys that are in the Hall of Fame back there, you know, all of them... First of all, all pitchers – I don't want to say all – a lot of pitchers cut balls, use pine tar, use spit, use what else, you know. That's kind of – how do you say it's cheating? It is cheating. It's part of the game, but it's cheating, and if you can get away with it, I guess they'd do it. It's like the guy that used corked bats. If you can get away with it, you do it. But, you know, I remember using a corked bat against Gaylord Perry in a game. And Gaylord Perry was just – I mean, it was a joke how much he was cheating on the mound. And so I borrowed somebody's bat on my team, and I went up there, hit a double in right center. I'm standing on second base going, "Nobody pick up that bat. Oh my gosh." I was scared to death, you know, scared to death. And I never, ever used a cork bat. I used it one time, one at bat, and got a double, and I don't think it would have made a difference.

COMMENTARY

Steroids use in baseball is a rather complex economic/ethical/spiritual issue. I believe it is unfair to only blame the individual players without taking into account the larger organization/cultural factors. Individual players have tacitly been given permission by Baseball to use drugs. At first, it was individuals who made the choice, but once the organization looked the other way, the culture became corrupted. Individual players were trying to make a living and compete. They took the drug to remain competitive. That is the economic reality. Some may argue that if they wanted to remain in the majors, they had to do it.

However, there are also ethical issues. Does one allow himself to become corrupt because of financial gain and worldly success? In the American culture, the answer is often, YES! Our culture is built around fame, power and fortune. We often place money above anything else, especially in sports and the business world. Does it matter that historic records were being broken because players had the physical advantage of drug enhancement? If the drug use was openly acknowledged, then the answer might be no. But it becomes a much different ethical matter when players lie about the truth and still claim the victories.

With regards to peak performance does it matter how we get there? Are we only concerned about performance, about success, about winning or are we also interested in the process of victory and what that process does for the development of the individual. The intent of this book is to look at the deeper character aspects among great athletes to see what we can learn about life, the human will and the human spirit. This book is not a cookbook about how to win and make a lot of money.

Peak performance has magical moments, like when Dick Fosbury is being lifted over the bar to win an Olympic Gold Medal. Those who believe in a spiritual reality believe that there is a relationship between the human will, the human spirit and God. What resides in one's heart is important. A pure heart can attract many wonderful and wondrous things. When a person takes a drug, then something is lost. The experience becomes, at best, a peak at a potential or possibility, but it does not become an integrated part of one's being. What is lost is the real growth of human consciousness and human ability to move to the next level. Once you take away the drug, then you strip away the ability to actually perform at that level.

One might argue that life is an experience to learn something more about who we really are, not just to make a lot of money, gain power and prestige. This learning process is most profound when we draw upon our natural inner resources and transcend our human condition and lift us to a high realm. A realm that clears the mind, opens the heart, and touches the soul. Sports has the ability to do this. The movie, *The Natural*, did such a thing. Real victory in the sports world inspires us all to greater hopes and greater accomplishments.

The spiritual loss with drug use in sports is that our children learn the wrong message. They learn that winning at any cost is more important than honesty, integrity and the evolution of the human will. They become robbed of the deeper meaning of life and are sold a Madison Avenue marketing version of life's meaning and purpose. While it is exciting to see a ball hit 400 plus feet and pitchers throwing in the 90's, baseball is about more than that: all sports are. The magic of peak performance is lost when success is only attributed to chemical means.

While this ethical discussion might seem beyond the scope of this book, I believe it is important because my goal in writing **Inside the Game** is to do more than just provide a

roadmap for success. While honesty and integrity may not be necessary for peak performance, and in fact, it appears they are not, these qualities do matter in higher ethical realms. Sports provide a model for young people on how live. Professional sports are just a game. How one relates to friends, spouses, business partners, etc, is not a game. If the message becomes, win at any cost, then the human spirit takes a hit. We lose trust and respect of each other and damage our ability relate as a society. How we play the game is as important as whether or not we win! Golf is probably the one sport that maintains its standard to this high ethical and moral standard. It is the only sport where a player will call a penalty upon himself.

ON FEAR

Doug DeCinces

I think one of the big things that probably changes athletes, in crucial situations or not, is the fear of failure. I always felt that the fear of failure could reach up and grab you more than anything else, to turn you from being successful to a failure in clutch situations. And I think every athlete, and I don't care if you're the greatest clutch player in the world, can't sit here and say that that isn't something that doesn't enter your mind. You're laying awake at night, going to a World Series game the next day and thinking, "God, I've got to do good. I hope I don't...."

The negative thoughts start falling into you. It's like when you're in a slump, and you go,

"God, I just feel terrible. I can't..., I'm not seeing the ball. I'm not...."

Every one of those things are negative thoughts and allow you to just twirl down lower and lower versus clearing the mind and having confidence that you have the ability to compete.

Dr. Mann

Did you have a way of dealing with that fear of failure?

Doug DeCinces

I would go from that to using the aggressively anger approach, anger but aggressive. “You’re challenging me and I’m going to beat you and there’s not going to be any ifs, ands or buts about this.” When you’re in that mindset in that key situation, it goes back to maybe my Brooks Robinson stuff, I knew that I had all my attention on what I was trying to do.

And I’ll tell you; there were times when a pitcher would knock me down, throw a ball at my head. Trust me, I got right back up and said,

“You want to hit me, you can throw this one inside, because I’m going to hit this outside pitch right back up the middle.”

Yeah. My goal at that time is like, “Okay, we’ll see. I’ll take that challenge. Let’s go.” You know, I became more aggressive, sometimes to the point where I would create failure because I was too aggressive. But, do you understand what I mean by that? I mean, if somebody were to knock me down, and I’d get right back up. And then my desire to beat that guy was twice as much.

Now, I played with a guy named George Hendrick, easiest going guy in the world. The last thing you ever wanted to do was to wake that guy up by knocking him down, because, here’s a guy that went to Vietnam and got shot and killed a lot of people. He was a military guy. Okay, now all of a sudden you wake him up. I mean, the next couple of pitches, he’d come up to home

plate, he's just hitting balls as hard as I've ever seen anybody hit them. And he was such an easygoing kind of guy and he was a good player. But boy, when you woke him up like that, he became aggressive. And no intimidations, like, "Nobody's going to intimidate me, pal. I'll show you who's going to get intimidated!"

I remember Frank Robinson who was my hitting coach for the Orioles. And I always remember, he goes,

"Man, you never give in to that pitcher. He's going to knock you down, you've either got two choices: get up and hit him or go out and beat the shit out of him."

That's what he used to say. "You've got two choices. What are you going to do? Because that one falling backwards isn't going to work." That's kind of the mental aggressiveness that I'm saying, that anger aggression that helped me at times really get through tight situations.

COMMENTARY – Overcoming Fear

The ability to overcome fear can be a major issue in anyone's life: fear of failure at work, in relationships, in business ventures or on the field. Athletics touches us all because we see players and teams in all sports battling to succeed. It is easy to become intimidated by players and teams that appear to be better, stronger or more talented. It is easy to become intimidated by someone who seems stronger, more aggressive and more intimidating. International politics is filled with threats and confrontations, hoping to create fear and force people/nations to back down. The drama of life is always filled with challenges to stand up for what one believes.

It has been said there that is no real courage without fear. Fear is a natural response when we feel threatened. It is how we deal with the fear that makes the difference, not whether or not

we feel the fear. Fear can only be overcome by facing it head on. One needs to find the inner strength to stand up and deal with the situation at hand. How can one find this inner strength?

Fear begins in the mind. We believe that something bad will happen to us. We will get physically hurt, embarrassed, shamed, financially devastated, homeless, and or emotionally hurt. Our sense of self is often tied up with our achievements and we think we will be worthless or less than if we do not win. Our sense of self is often connected to how others view us so we are afraid to say what we really think or feel because we fear that others will attack us for our beliefs. That truth is that we cannot control how others will react to what we do or say. Others may not like what we do and sometimes others have more talent and ability than we do. However, it is our attachment to the outcome that basically creates the fear in our mind. If we believed that we would be fine, no matter what the outcome, then we can be free to overcome any initial fear that might arise in the mind.

Sometimes that fear can be so great that we feel paralyzed to act. Fear releases chemicals in the body that have a strong effect. Sometimes, we need strong emotion to get our energy moving and take action. The initial burst of energy that can come from anger can be used constructively if positively directed. Wild lashing out is counter-productive, it usually just creates more problems, it does not solve problems. However, the focusing of anger to activate us into action can be a great thing.

However, ultimately it is a choice on how and what we do. We can be heroes or victims. If we choose to let our fear overwhelm us then we become victims and let others take advantage of us. If we choose to stand up for what we believe and believe in ourselves then we can be victorious.

On a spiritual note, it has been said that, “God helps those who help themselves.” This means we have to act and cannot sit back and hope someone else, God or our parents, will solve our problems. We can experience Divine intervention when we are doing our part, which requires a 110% commitment by us. When we are acting, unseen forces can be there to help us, to lead us, to speak through our intuition and to empower us to success. Inspired performance is just that: “To affect, guide, or arouse by divine influence.” When we know that divine influence is available, we do not feel alone in facing our most difficult challenges. Zack Johnson, the 2007 Master’s Champion won on Easter Day. He reported that he felt the presence of Jesus walking with him step by step on every hole. Was this his imagination or not. Those who have experienced this type of divine help think not! As a final thought, Jesus was there to help and inspire; Jesus did not hit the golf ball. Zach’s success was the result of individual talent, hard work as well as faith. We can accomplish great things when we believe. The body cannot accomplish what the mind believes to be impossible. Zach Johnson came down the stretch and beat the best golfer that the world may ever see, Tiger Woods. The fear of intimidation could have been enough to wipe him off the course.

In essence, then, fear starts in the mind and we have to find a way to stay positive. We have to believe we are capable of success. The depth of our heart and drive propel us to action. Our relationship with Spirit often gives us the extra faith and inner strength to persevere and give it our best shot.

On Belief in Oneself

Dr. Mann

What's the greatest thing you learned from playing baseball?

Doug DeCinces

Wow. That's a broad, broad question. You're only as good as your last at bat.

I knew that the confidence to go after something, that if I wanted it I could do it – I didn't have to listen to anybody else. I was told I wasn't good enough. In high school I was told, "You can't play pro ball." And then the guy who drafted me, Al Kubski, was one of the big scouts for the Orioles, and I met him, and he goes,

"Yeah, I've seen you play." He goes, "You can't run and you throw like a girl."

That was his quote to me. I was crushed. Can't run!? You know, I was a guard on the basketball team. I was a little bit thinner then. And can't throw? Man, how come I always have one of the better arms, you know. I played shortstop in high school. I mean, it was never bad- but the fact was that - you know, he didn't like the way I did it, and he felt I could be better. And the next year I'm drafted by the San Diego Padres, and I didn't sign with them out of college, my first year. That was the toughest decision I ever had to make. My parents let me make it, too.

Dr. Mann

Why did you choose not to sign with them?

Doug DeCinces

They wouldn't guarantee my education. I was a fifth round pick and they wouldn't guarantee my education? Back then, that was when the Padres had no money. Ray Kroc and McDonald's hadn't bought them yet. And I just refused it. I had scholarship offers and places I could have gone. I had a successful first year of college. I had scholarship offers out of high school. And I said, "If I'm good enough, I'm going to get drafted again." Well, guess who drafted me the next summer? That same guy that said I couldn't run and I threw like a girl.

And I remember seeing him when I got traded out here to the Angels, and he'd come to the game, and we'd sit and talk. And he goes, "You know, you always had the mental capability of not being satisfied." Maybe that's something I learned out of it. Never be satisfied, because there's always an opportunity to be better. I learned that from Brooks Robinson. Brooks Robinson, arguably the greatest fielding third baseman in the history of the game, he would take 40 ground balls every single day. Okay, now, I'm a rookie, and I'm supposed to be the guy replacing this guy. Well, if he's taking 40, how am I going to replace him taking 40? I'd take like 60 there, 60 at short, 60 at second. I'd wear out the coaches every single day, because it was that type of an approach that was going to allow me to be successful. So maybe that's what I learned the most.

And the other thing is: don't take yourself too seriously, because there's always somebody who's going to humble you in a hurry. That's why I said you're only as good as your last at bat. You hit a grand slam? Hey, great. Come back up, game's on the line, you strike out, you lose. Who cares what you did with the grand slam? The fact is you didn't win the game.

COMMENTARY

I think that this part of Doug DeCinces' story is invaluable for kids today. There are always people who will say, "You aren't good enough." If you let other people define you, you are throwing away your potential. You have to believe in yourself. Read the chapter on Dick Fosbury. The Easter European coaches told him he could not win with his high jump style. They all told him to stop doing it. Where would he be today if he had listened to them? Also, read the chapter on Lee Brandon. She had her arm severed in an accident and the doctors wanted to amputate it. They said she would never be able to use it. Not so, she became the Women's World Long Drive Champion, with two arms, after years of hard work, determination and self-belief she rehabilitated her damaged arm. When I was in high school I was pretty lost. I went to UCLA and had a full battery of aptitude and psychology test to help me figure out what I should do in life. After twenty hours of testing and interviewing the "experts" told me I would never make it in higher education. They recommended that I become a printer because I showed some interest in graphic arts. Where in the world would I be if I had listened to them. I certainly would not have a Ph.D., written a LA Times Best Selling Book (*Sacred Healing: Integrating Spirituality with Psychotherapy*) and certainly not be writing this book right now.

Doug's advice is also great. Work hard to achieve your goals. You can't just sit back and expect to be successful. Sometimes it takes a lot more work to do well than we think. I was shocked when I went to college, UCSB. I had to work twice as hard as I did in high school. But once I realized that is what it took, then I was fine. I adjusted and put out the effort. Be sure to read the chapter from Buck Rogers. He has some great material on "making the adjustment."

ON RESPONSIBILITY

Doug DeCinces

I know that whatever it is that kids are going after, whether you're a golfer or whatever sport it is, you have to be responsible for your own actions. Meaning, you're standing over a putt and you putt the ball and it doesn't go in the hole; the ball may have bounced off a spike mark or stuff like that, it doesn't make any difference. You putted it. It didn't go in. I think our society doesn't teach that today in all aspects of life. It's like these football players today, like Terrell Owens trying to renegotiate his contract. Well, you know what? He signed that contract. Now, it's one thing if the ownership comes to him and they say, "You know what? We want to reward you and change your contract." It's another thing for him to say, "Hey, I signed it, but you know what? Today I don't like it."

Or, you know, I think in our society, in a lot of ways, that somebody breaks the law and then everybody goes, "Oh, gee, well, he just made a mistake." No. We have laws in our society for a reason. That's so everybody can live together. Now, not all of us like all the laws, but on the same token, we have to respect those and be responsible to those.

And athletes I think are held at a different level today in society. You have responsibility, and you have to be responsible for your actions. And I think too much of that is thrown away because they're good athletes. They're better than the average athletes, so we'll turn our head and look the other way. I think that happens all too much. I applaud sometimes when I hear people say, "You know what? He signed the contract. He should live up to the contract," or, "You know what? I made a mistake and it's my responsibility to correct it." How often do you

hear that? I mean, when you do hear it, to me it stands out, because you don't hear it very often. People aren't responsible.

I could remember where I didn't like the dirt in the infield that I was playing on, you know, so that's a negative thought. And then if I made an error, a ball took a funny hop, I'd get angry because the field's not right. And the reality is I had to learn to be responsible for my own actions. I'm out there. I can't change the way it is. I've got to play it and that's the way it is. It's not going to change for the next guy that's coming out here. And if I was going to do anything about it, like if I didn't like the field, I'd be talking to the guys before the games and say, "I don't like how this is. You need to change this so I can feel comfortable." When you go to a visiting ballpark, you have no say so with the grounds crew. But when you're at home, it's your livelihood. You're playing 81 games at that position. You'd better dang well get it the way you like it, not the way the groundskeeper likes it. So if I didn't, if I wasn't responsible enough to take the action to have it changed to the way I like it, then you know what? I can't be angry; because I didn't do anything to change it to the way I like it. That's a type of responsibility for your own actions.

Golf is a great game. But you know what? You can't play the game being angry at yourself all the time. You have to take responsibility and make corrections. Golf is all about constant corrections. That's why, when I watch Tiger, when I see him get angry and focused, I kind of go, "Wow, look out." I mean, he just proved it at the PGA. He was seven over, 12 strokes behind Mickelson, and at the end, everybody's looking like, "Oh my gosh, here's Tiger. Where'd he come from?" What was he, three holes from not making the cut? One stroke? And he came back!

I mean, to me, mentally he might be one of the most, probably the single strongest competitor out there today. I'm sure there are other guys that have that, no doubt. But I'm impressed. You know, I mean, he gets angry at himself, but the next thing you know, he's put it aside and he's got to go hit that ball between the trees, and he is focused. He might be angry, and he takes that anger to focus on the next shot, but he hits this phenomenal tree shot, goes through, you know, 14 different trees, rises up and drops six feet from the pin. How does the guy do that? Well, I'll tell you what. He'd better be dang well focused, and he's not blaming anybody else for being in the trees but himself. And so he knows he's got to make changes. He's going to have to fix this, otherwise he's not going to win. I think that's a phenomenal attribute that he has. And I really recognize it, even at the level of competition that I was, and then to see the level of competition that he does in his sport, it's pretty impressive. Or to watch a guy like a John Elway at the end of the game just go, "Boys, listen to me and just go with me." I mean, I never saw anybody who could do the things that that guy could do at the end of a football game. It's a team sport. There's 11 guys, ten other guys on your side. But you know what? He had an uncanny ability to make sure every one of those guys was in full tune with what he wanted to have happen. How do you get any better than that?

Dr. Mann

Do you know how he did it?

Doug DeCinces

I don't. I just know that after a while, physically and mentally, the players believed, and he believed. There was no second-guessing. There was no fear of failure in him. It was like, "Here's what we're going to do, and you guys go with me." And I think, you know, you look at

all the successful athletes, those guys that can compete in those types of circumstances, it was like they had a task in front of them to complete. They may not have all been successful at reaching that task at the end of a game or whatever it was. But you know what? They weren't leaving anything out there on the field to be questioned. And I think that's what made them great.

COMMENTARY

This is a great note to end on “mental toughness and personal responsibility.” What exactly does mental toughness mean? It means your mind is stronger than your body and it controls your emotions: You don't give up until you reach your goal! It is natural to have fear arise, especially one someone is throwing a hard round object right at your head at a speed over 90 miles an hour. It is natural to be afraid in a boxing ring when you are getting pounded and your body really hurts and your are tired in the 10th round, but how you manage those thoughts and feelings determines the outcome.

If you are mentally tough, you don't let your emotions take control over you. You don't let you body dictate what you can do. You don't let adversity beat you down. You don't let other people's ideas about you determine how you behave. It is one thing to have a God given talent to be able to perform well, but that is not enough. How you show up in each moment determines if you can fully express your full potential. No one else is responsible for that. You have to drag yourself out of bed each morning to work out. You alone are there in each moment of competition, even if it is a team sport, doing what it takes to win. You alone know what your

“best” really is. Success usually does not come quickly. We often have to overcome test and only through perseverance can we succeed.

We live in a time where our national leaders do not provide good examples of responsible behavior. We see politicians lie, distort the trust, use intimidation and blame others in order to achieve their goals. We see sports heroes lie about taking illegal drugs. These are not good inspiring models for our youth.

The sports world can give us hope when we see a few rising to the top because of sound character, talent, hard work, perseverance, faith in their ability and a strong determination to never give up. These qualities provide a successful formula for every aspect of life: work, marriage, raising children or whatever. We are fortunate to have individuals like Doug DeCinces who are willing to share their life's story and give us an inside look at what it takes to rise to the top in life. He is an inspiration to us all!

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